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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

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Sino-Soviet Relations After a Year of Talking

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№ 44

23 October 1970
No. 0393/70A

CIA OCI SR 0393/70A

83-228542/1

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SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS AFTER A YEAR OF TALKING

One year ago on 20 October, Soviet and Chinese negotiators sat down in Peking to discuss the Sino-Soviet border dispute. Prior to the beginning of the talks, relations had reached their lowest point since the two antagonists had begun to quarrel openly. In the wake of border clashes in March 1969, skirmishing occurred at many locations along the frontier, military preparations were intensified, propaganda warfare reached a new intensity, and bilateral trade and diplomatic contacts dwindled. The Soviet leadership may have been weighing the advisability of stronger military action against China, and Moscow had embarked on a campaign calculated to convince Peking that this option was under active review.

In entering negotiations, each side was seeking to cool the situation for its own reasons. Peking sought to damp down tension along the border lest it lead to, or provide a pretext for, a Soviet attack against which it could not successfully defend. Moscow, concerned that an "open sore" on the exposed frontier meant prolonged border skirmishing and fearful that such a development would weaken its international position, sought to defuse the explosive border situation and to search for a limited accommodation.

A year of negotiation has failed to produce progress toward a border accord and has not led to any easing of the fundamental ideological and political hostility between Moscow and Peking. Nevertheless, both capitals have partially satisfied their objectives in undertaking the talks. The absence of fighting along the border has led to a marked reduction of tension in a situation that had threatened to get out of control. Some steps have been made toward re-establishing diplomatic contacts, and both sides have significantly lowered their voices. Despite these moves toward a tenuous stabilization, the efforts of both the USSR and China to improve their military and international positions indicate that relations will continue to be strained. Peking and Moscow seem ready to accept a prolonged stalemate in the border talks, however, to avoid a slide back toward open conflict.

Why They Continue to Talk

The factors that induced Moscow to press for negotiations on the border dispute in the spring and summer of last year have generally remained operative despite the lack of movement toward agreement. The most compelling of these continues to be Moscow's fear that resumption of open conflict along the border would produce either a prolonged drain on Soviet resources or pressures to escalate the fighting. Although frustrated by the impasse in negotiations, Soviet leaders find some satisfaction in the conversion of exchanges over the border from bullets to words.

The air of relaxation that the talks impart to Soviet relations with China is particularly valuable in easing Moscow's international position. Diminishing tension has made less obvious Moscow's fear that third parties such as the US would take advantage of its conflict with China and has lessened its concern that the conflict might hasten a possible rapprochement between Peking and Washington. Continuation of the talks also precludes accusations from Moscow's socialist allies, particularly Hanoi, that it is sacrificing the interests of international Communism to its conflict with China.

Moscow has been exploiting the talks to identify trends in Chinese policy and to look for splits in the leadership. In addition, the talks have contributed to an atmosphere in which some obvious shortcomings in Sino-Soviet relations, such as broken diplomatic contacts, can be mended.

China's acquiescence in the talks was motivated mainly by anxiety over Soviet military intentions. Although this concern has been somewhat muted over the past year, it still exists. Peking considers the contact provided by the talks vital, as it did not in 1964, when it broke off bilateral border talks with Moscow, and does not seem prepared to risk the unpredictable outcome of a break. Furthermore, the Chinese see the talks as a medium for divining future Soviet intentions.

The Chinese also wish to escape the onus of halting or disrupting the talks to avoid creating grist for the Soviet propaganda mill. In addition, they see value in appearing "reasonable" to the rest of the world—particuarly the socialist camp—while engaging in widespread diplomatic activities. All this does not mean that Peking is ready to abandon its quarrel with the USSR or is sanguine about prospects for the talks. Indeed, the Chinese have said they expect "irreconcilable differences" to prolong the meetings for months, even years.

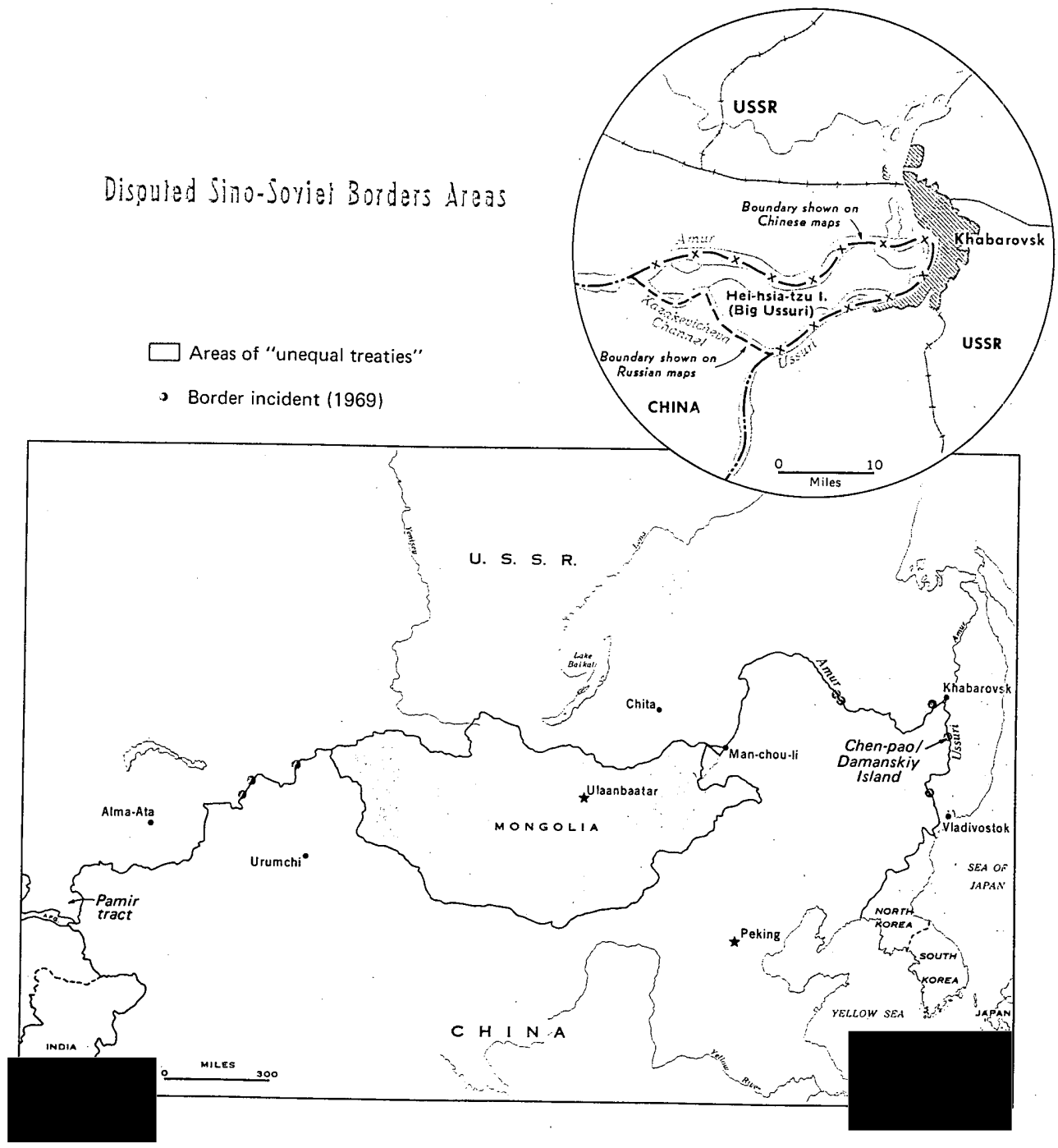
What Are They Talking About?

It is a measure of the importance that both Moscow and Peking attach to the talks that neither has broken an agreement to avoid a full-blown public presentation of their discussions. Nevertheless, both have resorted to occasional press or diplomatic leaks to communicate their own, frequently distorted, version of the negotiations. These have obviously been designed to put the other side in a bad light, but there has been general concurrence on the points preventing progress.

Chinese proposals have clearly reflected Peking's primary concern to reduce the Soviet military threat. Peking has demanded agreement on mutual withdrawal of major military units from the frontier, of armed personnel from disputed areas, and of Soviet forces from Mongolia as a precondition to discussing territorial issues. Because most Soviet forces are deployed close to the frontier while Peking's troops are not, these proposals mainly work to the detriment of the USSR. The Soviets have therefore steadfastly resisted them because in addition to diminishing Moscow's military advantage they would open the border areas to possible Chinese "marauding," and lend legitimacy to Chinese territorial claims.

Moscow also resists the Chinese demand that it acknowledge that the tsars "unfairly" forced Imperial China to yield some 590,000 square miles of territory in Siberia and Central Asia.

Disputed Sino-Soviet Borders Areas



Both Peking and Moscow have long tacitly recognized that the present border provides the probable basis for any future frontier agreement, but the USSR will not open itself to revanchist Chinese claims by admission that its boundaries are based on "unequal treaties." Another sticking point has been a Chinese proposal that both sides agree to a nonaggression treaty covering both conventional and nuclear forces. Moscow sees this as a backhanded attempt to force an admission that it has employed military pressure on Peking. Moscow has sought to turn the tables on Peking on this issue by making a Soviet agreement on the nonuse of force dependent on the Chinese signature of a border accord.

The Soviets have attempted to gloss over the issue of their military activities and turn the negotiations to a discussion of frontier demarcation. They have tried to get Peking's agreement on the identification of uncontested sections of the frontier and have proposed that procedures be established to adjudicate the disputed territories. These sections include 8,000 square miles of wasteland in the Pamirs, a 375 - square mile area at the Man-chou-li railhead in northwest Manchuria, and about 700 contested islands in the Amur and Ussuri border rivers. The Soviets have also proposed that both sides agree on a protocol for regulation of the economic use of frontier areas by herdsmen and fishermen, and on procedures for settling future differences.

Although the Soviets appear ready to make territorial concessions—they have even privately indicated that they would give up "blood soaked" Damanskiy/Chen-pao Island, scene of the major border clashes of March 1969—they are unwilling to acknowledge the Chinese position that the boundary in the Far East follows the main channel in the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Although this principle has a firm basis in international law, Moscow adamantly resists accepting it mainly because it would then lose control of the strategic island—named "Big Ussuri" by the Soviets and Hei-hsia-tzu by the Chinese—located at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri rivers opposite Khabarovsk, a principal city in the Soviet Far East. The Soviets contend that Chinese control of this island would place the boundary "down the main street of Khabarovsk" and last August emphatically stated their intention to retain it by publicizing plans for its development.

Developments on the Frontier

Although the situation along the frontier is tense, there appears to be no actual combat. Both sides have apparently abided by the informal understanding reached during the Chou-Kosygin meeting in September 1969 to employ restraint and to refrain from sending troops into disputed territory occupied by the other. Moscow, for example, has reluctantly tolerated Chinese occupation of Damanskiy/Chen-pao Island, according to statements by Soviet diplomats.

Although border forces of both countries apparently have instructions to act prudently, the border situation remains highly volatile, and the makings of a confrontation are at hand should either side choose to touch it off. Soviet diplomats have recently claimed that Chinese herdsmen and fishermen are using Soviet territory "without permission."

Normalization of State Relations

Given the failure of Moscow and Peking to make substantial progress in resolving their political differences, the absence of rapid improvement in other aspects of bilateral state relations has not been surprising. Chou En-lai apparently gave grudging agreement when Premier Kosygin said during their meeting in September 1969 that a return to more businesslike procedures in diplomatic, trade, and other state contacts would facilitate the easing of tensions. Infusion of meaning into this principle has been painfully slow, however, and characterized by mistrust and vindictiveness.

Moscow's protracted effort to return an ambassador to Peking has exemplified the problem.

Chou and Kosygin apparently agreed in principle to restore ambassadorial relations, which were disrupted in 1966 during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. When Moscow named its man in March of this year, however, Peking procrastinated in accepting him, evidently suspecting a move to downgrade the border talks to ambassadorial level and resenting Soviet selection of a man identified with anti-Chinese polemics. Moscow eventually obtained Peking's agreement by indicating its intention to continue the talks at the deputy ministerial level and selecting a different candidate, Vasily Tolstikov, formerly boss of the Leningrad party apparatus. Although Tolstikov arrived in Peking on 10 October, the Chinese have remained silent about reciprocating.

Vasily Tolstikov, new Soviet Ambassador to China

The annual Sino-Soviet river navigation talks, which began in July, also have run afoul of the failure to improve the political climate. Normally, these talks deal with technical matters relating to use of the border rivers for shipping, such as dredging and navigational aids. Navigation matters may have become linked with the territorial dispute, particularly ownership of contested riverine islands. The continuation of the navigation talks for more than four months without any indication of progress raises the possibility that, as in 1967 and 1965, no agreement may be reached.

Trade negotiations have also dragged, and a significant increase in economic exchange seems unlikely as long as political differences remain unresolved. The failure to conclude a Sino-Soviet trade agreement last year, along with the disruptive effect of the border fighting, reduced economic exchange to a record low of $57 million. This contrasts with 1959's record high of over $2 billion. This year, trade discussions between low-level commercial representatives in Peking have evidently resulted in a general agreement to increase trade somewhat. The agreement has not yet been formalized, however, and 1970 trade thus probably will remain well below the 1968 level of $95 million.

The moderating of Sino-Soviet tempers during the last year, nevertheless, has produced a few symbolic developments. For example, the Moscow-Peking "hot line," which was disrupted by the Chinese at the height of the border tension last year, has apparently been restored. Children of Soviet diplomats have returned to Peking for the first time since the Cultural Revolution. In addition, low-level barter trade talks were conducted last summer between local Chinese and Soviet groups in the Far East. Such steps, however, have mainly flowed from the dampening down of tension along the border rather than from political reconciliation.

The USSR's opening this month of a permanent air route to Hanoi via India suggests that some bilateral arrangements may never exist as they did in happier days. Prior to the Cultural Revolution, Moscow-Hanoi flights went through Peking, but they were terminated in 1967 when Soviet passengers were beaten by Red Guards. Moscow evidently is not confident that such harassment has permanently ended and consequently has opened the alternative route.

Needless to say, contacts between the Soviet and Chinese Communist parties are nonexistent and show no sign of being re-established. Ideological differences—as demonstrated by Peking's major attack on Moscow's marking of Lenin's centennial last April, and Moscow's bristling rejoinder a month later—continue to contribute to the aggravation of relations. Although both sides have suppressed direct ideological polemics during the past several months, it seems likely that they will resurface periodically.

USSR Continues to Amass Military Forces Opposite China

Moscow continues to view its military strength along the border as an essential element of its policy toward China and has continued its military build-up at a deliberate pace while the talks in Peking are under way.

The Soviets last November publicly acknowledged the creation of a Central Asian Military District (MD) designed to consolidate control of forces opposite Sinkiang that formerly were subordinate to the Turkestan MD. Considerable Soviet military activity has also taken place in Mongolia during the past year. Marshal Grechko's visit to Ulaanbaator this past September was the first by a Soviet defense minister since 1966 and demonstrates the importance Moscow attaches to its military position in Mongolia. In the Trans-Baikal and Far East MDs, the Soviets have apparently continued to expand and fill out their forces during the past year.

Since 1965, Soviet forces along the border are estimated to have more than tripled. Approximately 37 divisions are thought to be in place opposite China but it is highly unlikely that all are combat ready. These forces and their support units total about 325,000 men and are backed up with heavy concentrations of artillery and tactical nuclear weapons.

The Soviet build-up has been gradual and deliberate, suggesting that at the time the decisions were being made the Soviet planners perceived no immediate danger from the Chinese. Rather, they appeared to be building a force intended to counter any future Chinese threat and to fill political needs. There has been no evidence indicating an appreciable change in the rate of deployment in the past year, suggesting that Moscow has not attached additional urgency to the border build-up as a result of the 1969 border fighting.

The Soviet forces now deployed along the border have the capability to repel any attack the Chinese could launch for the next few years. Most of the divisions along the border, however, are understrength. They are not, therefore, prepared to conduct large-scale offensive operations without substantial reinforcement from the European USSR. At present, however, they probably are capable of conducting division-sized raids across the Chinese border. If the existing divisions along the border and the nondivisional support structure were filled out, the Soviets would have the capability to conduct major offensive operations into China, seizing large areas on the northern periphery of the country, including Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and Sinkiang. Even should the Soviets establish such a capability, however, it would not necessarily mean they would employ it. Traditional Soviet practice has been to maintain forces clearly in excess of security needs.

In addition to its military rationale, the Soviet build-up against China has important political motivations. The overwhelming force deters Chinese "adventurism" along the border and assures the Soviet leadership that it is negotiating with Peking from a position of strength. These forces—as shown last year—can be used to intimidate Peking. Continuation of the build-up heightens Chinese apprehensions over Soviet intentions and makes Peking somewhat more susceptible to diplomatic pressure. The Soviet leadership also probably views the force as a possible element of leverage in any post-Mao leadership struggle.

Chinese War Preparations: Symbolic and Real

The Chinese obviously view the Soviet build-up with some apprehension. An important aspect of China's strategy against the Soviets has been its own "war preparations" campaign. Some aspects of the campaign serve to bolster national unity while others, such as efforts to increase industrial and agricultural production and to disperse population and industry, promote long-standing policies. A principal goal, however, has been to deter the Soviets by stressing that China is prepared to fight no matter what the odds. Some of the well-publicized quasi-military measures—such as extensive construction of air-raid shelters and trenches, stockpiling of strategic materials and food, and emphasis on regional self-sufficiency—seem aimed at underscoring for Moscow's benefit the fact that Peking plans an in-depth defense of its territory. At the same time, the "war preparations" theme furthers Peking's propaganda line that Moscow is the potential aggressor in the dispute. As Peking has become more relaxed about the Soviet threat, however, it has given less emphasis in its propaganda to the continuing campaign.

Peking has also made improvements in its military position designed to underscore the seriousness of the "war preparations" drive as well as to improve its defensive position. Clandestine reporting has suggested that some troops have been moved north, and the abolition of the Inner Mongolian Military Region indicates that Peking is attempting to improve command and control of its forces in the north.

The Chinese undoubtedly realize that Moscow is aware of their military improvements. In June, for example, a Moscow broadcast labeled as "indeed significant" reports that units formerly trained "to deal with the Chiang gang have been transferred to the Sino-Soviet border area." The Chinese, however, probably believe that Moscow—despite its propaganda—will interpret these actions as defensive rather than as preparations for a large-scale move against Soviet-held, disputed territory.

Peking Attempts to Break out of Its International Isolation

Peking probably judges that it can counter the Soviets at present through an active, traditional diplomacy more effectively than through polemical exchanges and a hermit-like attitude toward the rest of the world— as was the case when the 1969 border clashes took place. The general thrust of Peking's strategy since the Peking talks began, therefore, has been to reduce its vulnerability to Moscow's military and diplomatic pressures through positive diplomatic action.

A major aspect of this has been China's successful efforts to expand and improve its international contacts, most clearly illustrated by the return of 28 ambassadors to posts vacated during the Cultural Revolution. In particular, China's ties with France, Romania, Yugoslavia, North Vietnam, and North Korea have blossomed during the past year. Peking has also broadened its efforts to develop new friends, such as Canada, Italy, Peru, and Chile, and has made its international presence felt by a variety of friendly gestures to a heterogeneous group of states. The Chinese have also revealed a strong interest in taking their "rightful place in the UN," which would allow them a prestigious forum for presentation of their case against Moscow as well as the West. Most dramatically, they resumed contacts in Warsaw with the US in January of this year. The talks have been suspended since the US intervention in Cambodia, but Peking has made clear its intention to resume them. They are probably no longer quite so important to China in the Sino-Soviet context, however.

The Chinese return to the international arena is designed, in the first instance, to counter Soviet attempts to perpetuate and if possible to increase the self-imposed diplomatic isolation into which China drifted during the Cultural Revolution. This relative isolation in itself made China

vulnerable to Soviet pressures, and its termination was obviously to Peking's advantage. But in addition, more extensive and closer contacts abroad have probably allowed Peking to gain greater insight into Soviet intentions by assessing the views of third parties, while at the same time they have given China a wider forum in which to present its own case. To achieve this end, Peking has gone to some lengths to appear "reasonable"—primarily by maintaining a general polemical standdown on Sino-Soviet bilateral issues since the Chou-Kosygin meeting.

Moscow Seeks to Keep Peking Bottled Up

Moscow has, in turn, continued to press to "contain" China internationally despite the easing of bilateral tension. Just as Peking suspects, this policy is aimed at increasing Chinese vulnerability to Soviet political and military pressure. It encompasses continued emphasis on "socialist unity" to isolate China ideologically, efforts to increase Soviet influence in Asia at Chinese expense, and attempts to foster Peking's continued exclusion from the international community.

Moscow's efforts to press for closer "socialist unity" have taken a particularly anti-Chinese cast in Eastern Europe, where the USSR has vigorously pushed its interpretation of the Warsaw Pact as applicable against China. It has pointedly claimed that treaties renegotiated last year with Czechoslovakia and Romania, as well as earlier ones with Hungary and Bulgaria, commit each contracting party to come to the other's aid in the event of attack by "any state." The Soviets have also indoctrinated East European leaders with their interpretation of the "China problem" through consultations, and by visits to Mongolia and the Soviet Far East.

Moscow wants to impress on the East Europeans that geographic, strategic, and political realities dictate their support for the USSR in the event of a Sino-Soviet conflict. In addition, Moscow is seeking to put its East European allies on notice that even now excessive flirtation with Peking is not acceptable.

MOSCOW ON CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

The Peking leaders are responsible for imposing their adventuristic tactics on some detachments of the Communist and national liberation movement in Asia and Africa, thus dooming them to defeat and rout. On believing advisers from Peking, tens of thousands of courageous fighters have to pay with their lives and the revolutionary movement in some countries was pushed far back. Such is the result of the adventuristic intrigues and provocations of the Peking "ultra-revolutionaries."

Pravda, 18 May 1970

In Asia, Moscow has sought to intensify fear of China through assiduous efforts to portray Peking as aggressive and adventuristic. Asian Communists have been warned that Peking will subordinate their interests to its own goal of "Chinese hegemony over Asia." A steady stream of Asian visitors has been greeted in Moscow, and the Soviets have made diplomatic and commercial demarches in states such as Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines, where Soviet influence has heretofore been minimal.

Moscow's handling of events in Indochina following Sihanouk's ouster dramatically demonstrated the intensity of Soviet concern over Chinese influence in that area. The Kremlin has persistently indicated that it will not endorse Sihanouk's provisional government as long as the Prince is under Peking's domination. Although this position has put Moscow out of step with Hanoi on an important issue, the Soviets calculate that as long as they give Hanoi the military and economic assistance it wants, they will retain their influence there. In any event, Moscow is still counting on North Vietnam to counter Peking in Indochina over the long run.

Moscow's efforts to isolate Peking took a new turn this fall when the USSR privately threatened to oppose Belgium's candidacy for a Security Council seat if it presented a resolution at the UN that might have fostered China's entry. Heretofore the Soviets have not employed strong-arm tactics on the issue of Chinese representation.

Moscow's relations with the West have also been subtly but significantly affected by its continuing difficulties with China. Although speculation is often overdrawn that last year's border fighting spurred Moscow to seek diplomatic agreements with the West in order to "obtain a free hand against China," the USSR is working to avoid a simultaneous heightening of tension on both its eastern and western flanks. Such policies as pursuit of a Soviet - West German accord, advocacy of a European security conference, and exploration of a strategic arms agreement have a long history and logic of their own. Their coincidence with Moscow's desire to devote additional resources to its China problem, however, is certainly a point in their favor. In addition, Moscow relishes the jitters created in Peking by the specter of an East-West detente.

Nevertheless, Moscow's unwillingness to make concessions indicates that it is not going to sacrifice important interests, or, as in the Middle East, to curb efforts to expand its influence, simply to secure agreement with the West. Finally, Moscow realizes that the relationship between its policies toward China and toward the West is a two-edged one. Moscow is acutely sensitive to any suggestions that the West is attempting to take advantage of Soviet concern with China to improve its position vis-a-vis the USSR. Thus, Moscow has sought to temper its dispute with Peking in part to ensure that it does not have to yield to the West on significant positions.

The View From Peking

The deep suspicion and preoccupation over long-range Soviet military and diplomatic intentions that China demonstrated earlier this year remain as strong as ever and color Peking's current diplomatic activities world-wide. The Chinese, however, probably consider that the reduction of tensions in the immediate border region will allow them to avoid any concessions in the Peking talks.

Nevertheless, Peking probably judges that the Soviets are focusing their efforts on finding an opportunity to compel a humiliating Chinese retreat on the frontier question, and that military pressure will continue to be a major tactic. For this reason, it probably expects the Soviets to continue filling out and improving their forces along the border. Peking apparently does not rate very high the likelihood of either an early Soviet "surgical strike" against Chinese advanced-weapons facilities or a general and full-scale invasion of China, but clearly it has not ruled out these possibilities entirely. Indeed, in assessing Soviet intentions, it seems likely that the Chinese do not

PEKING VIEWS THE SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP

Social-imperialism greedily eyes Chinese territory. It has not for a single day relaxed its preparations to attack China. It claims that it poses no threat to China. Why then does it mass troops in areas close to Chinese borders? Why has it dispatched large numbers of troops into another country which neighbors on China? Why does it frenziedly undertake military deployments to direct its spearhead against China? It is clear that social-imperialism, like US imperialism, says that it poses no threat to China only to weaken our vigilance, to fool the people of its own country and the world.

Joint Peking editorial marking 43rd anniversary of the People's Liberation Army 1 August 1970

feel they can be certain just what Moscow will do. Chinese statements, both public and private, have frequently alluded to Soviet "perfidy" and untrustworthiness. Moreover, Peking may well consider that the Soviets could at any time respond with a harsh local reprisal to normal Chinese patrolling in the border area, and that such a clash could quickly escalate, either through miscalculation or as a result of deliberate Soviet aggressiveness, into a major confrontation. An attempt to forestall such a possibility was a major Chinese objective in the Chou-Kosygin agreement last year, and it remains an important Chinese motive in keeping the dialogue going in Peking.

The Chinese probably also anticipate continued Soviet diplomatic pressures aimed at isolating and weakening them as a complement to the Soviet military "threat." They clearly view current Soviet diplomatic activities as indicative of such an approach. Moscow's recent public gestures toward China suggesting a conciliatory attitude to bilateral problems have been interpreted by the Chinese as an attempt to lessen Chinese vigilance against possible future "surprise attack" and to justify such an action internationally by branding Peking as hostile and intransigent. By the same token, Chinese charges that Moscow's recent diplomatic moves in the Middle East and with regard to Germany were designed to free Soviet hands "for moves against China" were probably at least partially believed at home. Above all, Peking seems convinced that Moscow is working hard all around the world to paint China in the darkest possible colors to ensure that, isolated diplomatically, it will be vulnerable to continued and perhaps increased Soviet pressures.

If the Soviets should step up the pressure, China will probably react as it did last year, conceding only what is necessary to deflect the immediate threat without prejudicing its over-all claims. Peking's increased confidence in its ability to control tensions along the border and its improving international position will probably be major factors supporting continued resistance to Soviet demands.

The Outlook From Moscow

The Soviet leadership probably takes some satisfaction from the reduction of Sino-Soviet tensions that has occurred during the past year. Moscow probably hopes that Peking's own moves toward domestic and international moderation will incline the Chinese to stabilize relations further. It is doubtful, however, that Moscow has a great deal of confidence that this will be the case with the "unpredictable" Chinese.

Moscow realizes, however, that it has little positive leverage that could impel Peking toward an agreement on the border or improvement of other aspects of state relations. Although the USSR might consider a more belligerent line involving increased military pressure attractive in view of its success in getting Peking to the negotiating table, the Kremlin appears to have concluded that sabre-rattling is only likely to stiffen Peking's resolve while impeding Soviet efforts to project a favorable international image of its conduct in the dispute. A more bellicose posture might also lead to collapse of the talks themselves or produce a resumption of fighting along the border, in which case the USSR would be right where it was over a year ago.

On the other side of the coin, Moscow is obviously not willing to make the major retreat needed to entice Peking to sign a frontier accord. Periodic hints that the USSR is readying some "new proposal" in the talks and occasional cooing by Kremlin leaders seem mainly designed to give the Peking talks the appearance of substance and project an international image of Soviet restraint and flexibility. Indeed, it is possible that conciliatory gestures such as the dispatch of Ambassador Tolstikov to Peking without reciprocal Chinese action has already irritated Kremlin hard-liners.

Moscow thus appears ready to continue the talks for the foreseeable future, while working to restore a limited degree of bilateral contact. The replacement this past summer of chief negotiator Kuznetsov with the much-less-valued Deputy

Chief Chinese negotiator, Chiao Kuan-hua

Chief Soviet negotiator, Leonid Ilichev

Foreign Minister Leonid Ilichev seems to have signaled Moscow's adoption of such a course. This will probably incline Moscow to shrug off minor pin pricks and slights from Peking, while sharply responding to major polemical attacks such as the Chinese assault this past September on the West German - Soviet treaty.

A policy of restraint and "coexistence" accords with the long-term Soviet hope that a post-Mao China may produce a situation more to the liking of the USSR. Moscow may dream that, after Mao, China could disintegrate into squabbling regions or become preoccupied with internal power struggles. More realistically, the Soviets may hope that a post-Mao leadership will pursue a more tempered policy toward the USSR and avoid some of the excesses inspired by Mao's personal animosity toward Moscow. An essential element of such a long-term approach, however, will be continued reliance on military strength.

Peking's development of advanced strategic weapons will increasingly influence Moscow's outlook. The few public and private Soviet comments on China's weapons program have tended to belittle Chinese progress on the grounds that China cannot threaten the USSR for many years. The USSR appears to be calculating that its own nuclear deterrent and, if its employment is necessary, its pre-emptive capability, are adequate defenses against a Chinese nuclear attack. Soviet policy makers have probably concluded, however, that Peking's acquisition of nuclear weapons will make China even less susceptible to Soviet pressure. Indeed, this concern seems to lie behind the oft-voiced Soviet interpretation that Peking is stonewalling in the talks in order to buy time to push ahead in its advanced weapons program. In any event, the Kremlin may be increasingly vexed by pressure from Soviet hawks that it "do something" about Peking's bomb. The Soviets will also have to wrestle with its implications for broader Soviet policy in Asia as well as relations with China.

Prospects

Peking and Moscow now seem intent on continuing the vague and unformalized accommodation that has emerged along the frontier during the past year as a result of the talks. This arrangement has reduced the concern of both over escalation while requiring neither to concede anything of its position on a frontier settlement. The border situation, however, remains subject to accidental confrontation, and either side can increase tension along the frontier if domestic or international politics so requires.

Neither side has given an inch on ideological differences, and Moscow shows no signs of adjusting to Peking's great-power aspirations. Movements toward "normalization of state relations" have thus largely been atmospheric gestures with little political content. Meanwhile, Moscow's continuing military build-up can only enhance Peking's suspicions of Soviet intentions, while Peking's progress toward a credible nuclear

striking force increases the Kremlin's concern. Moreover, Peking's resurgent diplomatic activity and international gains may become a more significant concern to Moscow and trigger a stepped-up Soviet effort to discredit the Chinese abroad. Thus, after a year of talking, the prospects for imminent military confrontation between Moscow and Peking have been reduced, but the basic factors producing continued and perhaps heightened contention remain operative. [redacted]

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